

SECTION III—REMARKS

This amendment is submitted in response to the final Office Action mailed May 21, 2007, for the above-noted patent application. Claims 1-33 are canceled and new claims 34-51 are added. Claims 34-51 remain pending in the application. Applicants respectfully request allowance of all pending claims in view of the following remarks.

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claims 2-6, 11-13 and 24-27 for being dependent on rejected base claims but indicated that these claims would be allowable if re-written in independent form to include all the limitations of their base claims and any intervening claims.

New claim 34 combines the limitations of canceled claim 2 with those of its base claim, canceled claim 1. Applicants submit that claim 34 is therefore patentable and respectfully request its allowance. New dependent claims 35-40 depend on allowable independent claim 34, and Applicants submit that these claims are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claim, as well as by virtue of the subject matter disclosed therein.

New claim 41 combines the limitations of canceled claim 6 with those of its base claim, canceled claim 1. Applicants submit that claim 41 is therefore patentable and respectfully request its allowance.

New claim 42 combines the limitations of canceled claim 11 with those of its base claim, canceled claim 10. Applicants submit that claim 42 is therefore patentable and respectfully request its allowance. New dependent claims 43-44 depend on allowable independent claim 42, and Applicants submit that these claims are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claim, as well as by virtue of the subject matter disclosed therein.

New claim 45 combines the limitations of canceled claim 13 with those of its base claim, canceled claim 10. Applicants submit that claim 45 is therefore patentable and respectfully request its allowance.

New claim 46 combines the limitations of canceled claim 24 with those of its base claim, canceled claim 23. Applicants submit that claim 46 is therefore patentable and respectfully request its allowance. New dependent claims 47-50 depend on allowable independent claim 46, and Applicants submit that these claims are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claim, as well as by virtue of the subject matter disclosed therein.

New claim 51 combines the limitations of canceled claim 27 with those of its base claim, canceled claim 23. Applicants submit that claim 51 is therefore patentable and respectfully request its allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 7-10, 14, 23 and 28-33 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as obvious in view of, and therefore unpatentable over, combinations of the following references: U.S. Patent No. 5,212,371 to Wike Jr. *et al.* (“Wike”); U.S. Patent No. 5,581,071 to Chen *et al.* (“Chen”); and European Patent No. EP1128315 to Rigoni *et al.* (“Rigoni”). Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner’s rejections are rendered moot by the cancellation of these claims.

Conclusion

Given the above amendments and accompanying remarks, all claims pending in the application are in condition for allowance. If the undersigned attorney has overlooked a teaching in any of the cited references that is relevant to allowance of the claims, the Examiner is requested to specifically point out where such teaching may be found. Further, if there are any informalities or questions that can be addressed via telephone, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney at (206) 292-8600.


Charge Deposit Account

Please charge our Deposit Account No. 02-2666 for any additional fee(s) that may be due in this matter, and please credit the same deposit account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

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